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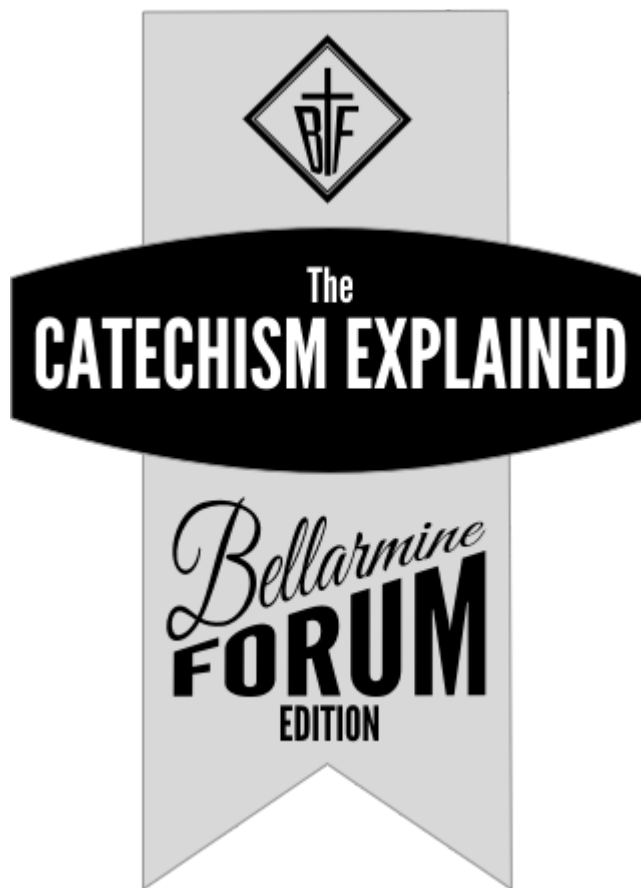


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The Relaxations Permitted to the Christian

1. It is lawful for those who work to seek relaxation, for this is a means of renewing one's strength after one's work is done.

The bow never unspanned will break; and the man who works without cessation will become unfit for work. Social convivialities are productive of much good; they promote charity and concord. It is God's will that we should enjoy recreation; He has provided us with pleasures in nature alone; the beautiful coloring, the delicious perfume of the flowers; the song of birds, the various kinds of fruit, etc. Our Lord Himself was a guest at banquets, even at a marriage feast, and He speaks without disapproval of music, etc. (*Luke* xv. 25).

2. We must not, however, indulge too freely in amusements, and certainly we must eschew all those that are sinful; more over in all our recreations the thought of God must be present to our mind.

We must not be too great votaries of pleasure, for diversions are not the object of life, they are only a means of renewing our strength after our work. Life is for work, not for play. Excess in everything is harmful; medicine taken in too large doses is injurious, and the best condiments, if too freely used, spoil a dish. So it is with amusements; they are only to be enjoyed when all our duties have been duly performed. The thought of death is a useful check upon indulgence in the pleasures of the senses; if we remember that at any moment our soul may be required of us, we shall be moderate in our use of enjoyments. An exaggerated love of pleasure and craving for excitement prevails in the present day; one festivity and dissipation follows another, and yet everywhere one hears complaints of the evil times. May not the thirst for enjoyment be the cause? Above all, dangerous or sinful pleasures are to be avoided, such as gambling for high stakes, games of chance which are prohibited, slandering the absent, sarcastic speeches, unseemly words, or contempt of holy things. Those who indulge in such pleasures are like thankless children who delight in offending their father. When enjoying innocent pleasures we should think of God, and our high destiny. The Psalmist says:

“Be glad in the Lord” (*Ps.* xxxi. 11). St. Charles Borromeo is said once to have played a game of billiards; when asked what he would do if he was told the Last Judgment was at hand, he replied: “I should finish the game, for I am playing for the glory of God, and He is present to my thoughts.”

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